

Interlanguage in Spontaneous EFL Speaking: Insights from Male and Female Learners

Khilda Evita Aisya¹

¹Department of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muria
Kudus, Kudus 59300, Indonesia
(202232004@std.umk.ac.id)

Fitri Budi Suryani^{2*}

² Department of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muria
Kudus, Kudus 59300, Indonesia
(fitri.budi@umk.ac.id)

Farid Noor Romadlon³

² Department of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muria
Kudus, Kudus 59300, Indonesia
(farid.noor@umk.ac.id)

*corresponding author

Abstract: : *Spontaneous speaking is challenging for EFL learners because it requires real-time language processing through an evolving interlanguage system influenced by the first language (L1). Although interlanguage has been widely studied, relatively few studies examine its processes in spontaneous speaking, particularly from an exploratory gender perspective. This study investigated interlanguage processes in unprepared oral production and explored gender-related patterns. A qualitative case study was conducted with six first-semester students (three males and three females) in the Department of English Education, Universitas Muria Kudus, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through field notes, semi-structured interviews, audiovisual recordings, and non-opt-in classroom observations. Selinker's (1972) five interlanguage processes provided the analytical framework. Four processes were sufficiently supported by the data: L1 transfer, the most frequently coded process, followed by overgeneralization, communication strategies, and learning strategies. Transfer of training was included in the coding framework but excluded from the final frequency count because the data did not establish a sufficient link between observed expressions and specific classroom instruction or practice. Descriptively, males produced more L1-transfer instances overall, whereas communication strategies appeared slightly more frequently among females. These observations are exploratory and should not be interpreted as general gender tendencies given the small sample. The findings suggest that spontaneous speaking can provide a productive context for revealing interlanguage processes and offer practical implications for supporting EFL learners' speaking development.*

Keywords: *Interlanguage; Spontaneous speaking; Gender; EFL learners*

Article History:

Received : 01 May 2026

Accepted : 30 September 2026

Revised : 28 September 2026

Available Online : 30 September 2026



Suggested Citation Format:

Aisyah, K. E., Suryani, F. B., Romadhon, F. R. (2026). Interlanguage in Spontaneous EFL Speaking: Insights from Male and Female Learners. *PANYONARA: Journal of English Education*, 8(2), 123–140. <https://doi.org/10.19105/panyonara.v8i2.24507>.

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is closely associated with the concept of interlanguage. This is a concept of a linguistic system that changes as learners travel from their first language (L1) to the language they want to learn (L2). The concept was first introduced by Selinker (1972), who noted that interlanguages are not merely a collection of errors but a language system that grows with them. Corder (1981) also says that this is not a failure but an indication that the internal language system of the learner is evolving. The interlanguage phenomena are more complicated in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting because learners have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom; this is distinct from learners in English as a second language (ESL), who have more exposure to the target language.

Previous research repeatedly shows that interlanguage processes frequently occur in the case of EFL learners. Despite the progress of their target language (R. Ellis, 2008; Han, 2009; Lightbown & Spada, 2019) research has revealed that English as a foreign language (EFL) learners may continue to experience difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and the development of target-like forms. Studies conducted in Indonesian EFL settings have also reported the presence of various interlanguage features. Rahayu, Soepriatmadji, & Purwanto (2022) identified persistent L1 transfer among first-semester learners. Similarly, Adnyani & Kusumawardani (2020) reported that the students tend to rely on their L1's patterns because of a lack of English vocabulary and grammar competence, while Anindya, Inayati, & Ulani (2022) as well as Fauziati (2017) found that processes such as overgeneralization and communication strategies commonly appeared in classroom interactions. Taken together, these studies suggest that interlanguage processes are common among Indonesian EFL learners, although they have mainly focused on general classroom performance and language production.

A particularly relevant context for investigating the interlanguage phenomenon is spontaneous speaking. Unlike prepared tasks, unprepared speaking requires learners to formulate and produce language with limited opportunity for prior planning, making it possible to observe how they draw on their available linguistic resources during real-time production (Foster & Tavakoli, 2009; Nation & Newton, 2020; Thornbury, 2005). Spontaneous speaking, characterised by immediacy and limited preparation time, poses considerable challenges even for experienced L2 users (Aslan & Taş, 2024). Recent studies have shown that EFL learners continue to encounter linguistic difficulties, such as limited vocabulary and pronunciation problems, as well as psychological barriers that hinder oral

proficiency (Fernández Sesma, Sortillón González, & Rodríguez Valenzuela, 2025). These findings indicate that spontaneous speaking provides a valuable context for examining how learners negotiate and utilize their interlanguage resources under real-time production demands.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interlanguage as a Dynamic System in Spoken Language Production

Interlanguage has traditionally been seen as a systematic and evolving linguistic system developed by second language learners as they move towards the norms of the target language. Selinker (1972) characterized interlanguage in his seminal work as the result of several processes that interact and function not separately, but simultaneously, including language transfer, overgeneralization, and learning strategies. This perspective has been further supported by further research highlighting learner language as a continuous process of cognitive reorganisation rather than a collection of simple errors (Corder, 1981; R. Ellis, 2008). Thus, interlanguage can be characterised as a context-sensitive and flexible system, the features of which are manifest variably depending on the task, modality and communicative requirements.

Early research on interlanguage mostly focused on written production. However, more recent research has highlighted spoken language as a more open window for understanding learners' evolving linguistic systems. Interlanguage is heavily influenced by processing constraints as learners have to plan, formulate, and articulate speech in real time. From a cognitive SLA perspective, spoken language production involves learners simultaneously allocating their limited attentional and working memory resources to different processes (Wen, Skehan, & Sparks, 2022). In spontaneous speaking, learners have to understand concepts, retrieve vocabulary, build grammatical structures and monitor their utterances under time pressure (Levelt, 1989). Due to the scarcity of these cognitive resources, learners tend to draw upon their prior linguistic knowledge and compensatory strategies, which may result in language transfer, overgeneralization, self-repair and other features of interlanguage. Compared with more prepared forms of language production, oral interaction therefore provides a useful context for observing how learners manage their developing linguistic systems under real-time production demands (Fauziati, 2017; Yakut & Bada, 2021). Therefore, oral data, in particular spontaneous speech, are becoming increasingly relevant to reflect the dynamic nature of interlanguage development.

Spontaneous Speaking and Cognitive Processing in EFL Contexts

Spontaneous speaking involves producing language with limited opportunity for prior preparation, requiring learners to retrieve vocabulary, construct utterances, and respond to interlocutors under real-time processing demands (Thornbury, 2005; Nation & Newton, 2020). In the present study, spontaneous speaking refers specifically to

unprepared oral production in which participants received a topic immediately before the interaction and were required to respond without prior scripting, memorization, or reading. Thus, the term refers to unprepared language production rather than naturally occurring conversation outside the classroom. Rather than serving as a direct measure of communication proficiency, spontaneous speaking in the present study provides a context for observing how learners mobilize their available linguistic and communicative resources under real-time processing demands

From a cognitive perspective, the time pressure involved in unprepared speaking may reduce learners' opportunities to consciously monitor and revise their output. Consequently, learners are more likely to rely on their available linguistic repertoire and compensatory mechanisms, which may lead to manifestations of interlanguage such as language transfer, overgeneralization, self-repair, hesitation, and communication strategies. In this sense, unprepared oral production provides an opportunity to observe interlanguage processes as learners formulate and monitor their utterances under immediate interactional demands.

Research in Indonesia and other countries shows that learners tend to use first language structures, ready-made sentences, and compensating methods in spontaneous speaking (Daflizar, 2024; Rahayu et al., 2022). The results suggest that speaking without extensive prior preparation can provide opportunities to observe how learners use their available linguistic resources during real-time production. However, previous studies have also examined interviews or semi-prepared speaking tasks, which may provide learners with greater opportunity for prior planning or rehearsal. Further investigation of unprepared oral production in classroom-based interaction can therefore provide additional insight into how interlanguage processes are manifested when learners formulate their speech with limited preparation.

Interlanguage Processes in Spoken EFL Production

In the research on interlanguage in oral production, commonly examined processes include L1 transfer, overgeneralization, and communication strategies. Transfer from L1 is frequently evident in the early stages of learning and is seen in syntactic structures, lexical choices, and pragmatic behaviours that show the influence of the first language (R. Ellis, 2008; Lightbown & Spada, 2019). Interestingly, this transfer can be not a hurdle but often a bridge that enables pupils to talk successfully even if they have not fully grasped the target language form.

On the other hand, overgeneralisation is a reflection of students' attempt to put together a target language system by extending a learned rule they have learnt to contexts in which the rule does not apply. The research on EFL contexts shows that the overgeneralisation is widespread in verb morphology and copulative structure, especially in the context of spontaneous communication with limited supervision (Betancourt

González & Alvarado Martínez, 2020; Wang, 2020). These patterns support the view that interlanguage development is a dynamic process with experimentation and eventual refinement of rules.

Communication methods are also an important part of oral interlanguage. Within the paradigm of Tarone (1981), tactics like circumlocution, self-repair and code-switching serve as adaptive tools that help learners to overcome linguistic limits while keeping fluency in speech. Empirical evidence shows that the use of communication strategies is greatly influenced by the challenges of the task and the level of confidence of the students. Spontaneous speaking situations usually trigger the use of this strategy more intensely compared to the tasks that have been prepared (Adnyani & Kusumawardani, 2020; Yakut & Bada, 2021). Thus, communication strategies can be examined as observable resources that learners use to address immediate communication problems during oral production.

Gender as an Individual Difference in Interlanguage and Speaking

Gender has long been recognized as one of the individual difference variables in second language acquisition. Although gender does not directly determine language attainment, it may influence learners' preferences, affective conditions, and strategic behavior, which in turn shape how linguistic resources are processed and utilized during communication (Dörnyei, 2005; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). From this perspective, gender may contribute to variations in the manifestation of interlanguage processes, particularly in situations that require learners to rely on their available linguistic repertoire under communicative pressure. Thus, the study of gender within interlanguage should not be viewed as a search for definitive differences between males and females, but rather as an examination of possible tendencies in the way learners utilize linguistic and strategic resources in the process of language production.

Mohtasham & Farnia (2017), Okyar (2023), Pakzadian & Tootkaboni (2018), and Zhang, Ardasheva, & Austin (2020) discovered that males and females differ in their selection of anxiety control strategies that impact speaking ability. Muktningrum, Mahmud, & Halim (2024) found that female students of the English Department in Indonesia tended to have more speaking anxiety than male students in speaking classes. In the field of public speaking, a similar tendency is also seen by Rahman Hz, (2022). The research of Ariyanti & Fitriana (2017) and Fauzi & Asi (2023) also shows the variation of compensatory approaches and the different levels of confidence in oral production that are influenced by gender.

Previous studies, such as Adnyani & Kusumawardani (2020), Fransiska & Habibi (2021), Harahap (2021), Muthia, Fahriany, & Utami (2021), Puspita (2019), and Rahayu et al. (2022) have provided useful insights into interlanguage and speaking performance, but there are several methodological limitations. Previous studies have provided useful insights into interlanguage and speaking performance, including learners' linguistic forms, speaking

performance, affective factors, and communication-related strategies. However, these lines of research do not fully address how different interlanguage processes are manifested when EFL learners produce English without prior preparation during oral interaction. In particular, the relationship between gender-related variation and the manifestation of interlanguage processes remains insufficiently examined in this specific type of speaking context. The present study therefore focuses on the observable linguistic and strategic processes that emerge during unprepared oral production and explores whether patterns of these processes vary across the male and female participants within the case. Similar patterns of interlanguage have been identified in international research in L1 and L2, particularly in the morphosyntactic domain (Betancourt González & Alvarado Martínez, 2020; Kamrul Hassan & Rami, 2024; Wang, 2020; Yakut & Bada, 2021). Therefore, examining gender in relation to interlanguage should not be understood as identifying fixed differences between males and females, but rather as exploring possible tendencies in the ways learners deploy linguistic and strategic resources during language production.

Studies focusing on spontaneous oral production remain relatively limited. In the context of university, Daflizar (2024) observed that the students' levels of speaking boldness inside and outside the classroom differed significantly, while similar effects have been observed among EFL freshmen in Spain (Dinsa, Seyoum, & Dinsa, 2022) and Vietnam (Uyen & Dieu, 2023). However, despite the growing body of research on gender-related differences in affective factors and speaking performance, limited attention has been devoted to examining how gender may relate to the manifestation of interlanguage processes during spontaneous oral production. Existing studies still focus on overall performance or affective variables, rather than the development of linguistic and strategic resources themselves. Consequently, further examination is needed to describe how interlanguage processes are manifested and whether descriptive patterns vary across male and female learners within a particular classroom case.

This study is significant because unprepared oral production provides an opportunity to observe how EFL learners draw on linguistic and communicative resources when they have limited time to formulate their speech. Examining these processes can provide a more detailed understanding of how interlanguage is manifested during oral interaction. The study also provides an exploratory description of gender-related variation observed within the particular case, without assuming that such variation represents general differences between male and female learners. Therefore, this study has 2 research questions, namely:

1. What interlanguage processes appear in EFL learners' spontaneous speaking?
2. What gender-related patterns in the manifestation of interlanguage processes can be observed within the case?

This research is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to understanding interlanguage dynamics in Indonesia, as well as make a practical contribution to more

inclusive and adaptive English teaching that takes into account the characteristics of individual learners.

METHOD

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. The focus of this research was to explore the interlanguage processes that appear in the spontaneous speaking of EFL learners. This study specifically examines how interlanguage processes emerge in spontaneous speaking and whether these patterns vary by gender. This research was carried out at Universitas Muria Kudus, especially in the speaking course for English Education students in the first semester. This design was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of the use of natural discussion in a real context (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2018). In this study, spontaneous speaking was operationalized as unprepared oral production, topic-induced pair interaction. Participants were not given advance notice of the research speaking schedule or the specific topics. During each speaking activity, the researcher arranged the participants in pairs, provided a topic immediately before the interaction, and instructed them to begin speaking without prior scripting, memorization, or reading. The researcher did not interrupt the interaction once the task had begun. Each pair was expected to interact for approximately five minutes; this period referred to the duration of the speaking interaction and did not include preparation time.

Participants

The subjects in this study were six first-semester students of the English Education Department at Universitas Muria Kudus who were selected from a total of 72 students using purposive sampling with the criteria: actively attending speaking lectures in the first semester, and also showing indications of the use of interlanguage processes in their speaking. The composition of the subject consists of three males and three females, which is balanced to allow for the analysis of gender differences (Dörnyei, 2005). As this study employed a qualitative case study design, the emphasis was placed on obtaining in-depth and information-rich data rather than achieving statistical representativeness. Therefore, the inclusion of six participants was considered appropriate for exploring the emergence of interlanguage processes and observing possible gender-related patterns within this particular context. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in the analysis and transcription.

Data and Source of Data

The data in this study are in the form of qualitative data consisting of three types: (1) Oral data, in the form of transcripts of unprepared conversations between students, (2)

Interview data, related to students' awareness of the language use and communication strategies, and (3) Field notes documenting contextual observations, non-verbal cues, and spontaneous reactions during the speaking tasks. The data was collected to answer two research questions. The first question was answered through the analysis of transcripts of students' spontaneous conversations, while the second question related to gender-related patterns was answered through comparative analysis between male and female pairs and follow-up interviews. The data were obtained directly from the participants through verbal interaction in the speaking class and follow-up interviews conducted in a semi-structured manner.

Data Collecting Technique

Data collection was carried out through several stages. First, non-participatory observation was carried out in class sessions where students were assigned to perform spontaneous conversations in pairs. The speaking activities were conducted across three recording cycles. In the first cycle, participants interacted with assigned partners on a given topic and were introduced to the recording procedure. In the second cycle, participants were paired differently and given a different topic. In the third cycle, participants again interacted with different partners and received a different topic. All three recordings were reviewed during the observation process. The third recording was selected as the primary dataset because participants appeared more familiar with the recording procedure and interactional setting by that stage. This selection was intended to provide a more stable sample of their unprepared oral production, while recognizing that increased familiarity with the procedure may also have influenced their performance. The earlier recordings were retained as contextual material for interpreting the participants' interactional behavior. All interactions were video-recorded not just to capture participants' verbal production, but also gestures, facial expressions, and other non-verbal indicators that complemented the field notes. Students were also allowed to choose any venue that they were comfortable with to reduce nervousness and foster spontaneous conversation. Although variations in recording locations may have influenced interactional dynamics, all recordings were conducted in relatively quiet and familiar settings to minimize external distractions. Field notes and video recordings were used to document contextual factors and support consistency in interpreting participants' verbal and non-verbal behaviors.

In addition to the speaking task, semi-structured interviews were carried out with each participant to investigate their experiences and awareness of their language use during the unprepared speaking activities. The semi-structured interviews followed a pre-prepared framework but allowed for flexibility to follow the natural flow of talk. Field notes were also written by the researcher to capture the social setting, non-verbal expressions, and spontaneous replies of participants. All data were collected over three weeks in English-speaking class activities and then transcribed and analyzed to identify interlanguage

processes and describe gender-related patterns. To ensure credibility, member checking was conducted by having participants review transcripts and interpretations. Observational triangulation was also used through field notes and video recordings to enhance the validity of the findings.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted through theory-driven thematic coding. First, the transcripts were reviewed repeatedly to identify non-target-like linguistic forms and interactional behaviors occurring during the participants' oral production. These observations were initially examined in relation to their linguistic characteristics and communicative context. Second, the identified instances were evaluated using Selinker's (1972) five interlanguage processes: first-language transfer, overgeneralization, transfer of training, communication strategies, and learning strategies. Communication-related phenomena were further examined using Tarone's (1981) framework, particularly the functions of code-switching, self-repair, and circumlocution.

The coding was theory-driven but data-dependent. Observable non-target-like forms or interactional behaviors were not automatically assigned to an interlanguage process. Each instance was classified only when the available linguistic, contextual, instructional, or interview evidence supported the relevant theoretical criterion. Interview data were used to support the interpretation of participants' reported planning, retrieval, and communication behaviors when relevant. When the available evidence was insufficient to establish the underlying process, the instance was not included in the process-frequency count.

Table 1.
Coding Scheme of Interlanguage Processes

Interlanguage Process	Coding Criteria
L1 Transfer	A non-target-like form was coded as L1 transfer when its lexical, grammatical, syntactic, or discourse pattern could be linked to Indonesian language structure or expression.
Overgeneralization	A form was coded as overgeneralization when a target-language grammatical or morphological rule was extended to a context in which the rule was not applicable.
Communication Strategy	An utterance was coded as a communication strategy when the learner used a compensatory or interactional move to overcome an immediate communication problem and maintain the intended message.
Transfer of Training	An utterance was coded as transfer of training only when the available classroom, instructional, or interview evidence

	established a plausible connection between the observed form and specific instruction or practice.
Learning Strategy	An observable speaking behavior was coded as a learning strategy when it indicated planning, lexical retrieval, monitoring, or reformulation during production and was supported by relevant contextual or interview evidence..

The coding was guided by Selinker's (1972) interlanguage framework and Tarone's (1981) communication strategy framework. Each instance was classified only when the available linguistic, contextual, instructional, or interview evidence supported the relevant theoretical criterion. Interview data were used to support the interpretation of participants' reported planning, retrieval, and communication behaviors when relevant. When the available evidence was insufficient to establish the underlying process, the instance was excluded from the process-frequency count. Consequently, although five categories were considered in the coding framework, only four interlanguage processes were sufficiently supported by the present dataset.

To enhance trustworthiness, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the transcripts and compared findings across video recordings, interview data, and field notes. Member checking was also conducted by allowing participants to review transcripts and interpretations to ensure that the findings accurately represented their experiences and intended meanings. The use of multiple data sources enabled triangulation and strengthened the credibility and consistency of the interpretation of interlanguage processes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of interlanguage processes identified in the unprepared oral production of six first-semester EFL learners, addressing the two research questions.

RQ1. What interlanguage processes appear in EFL learners' spontaneous speaking?

Based on the analysis of transcripts from the six participants, it was revealed that there were four interlanguage processes that were sufficiently supported by the data: L1 transfer, overgeneralization, communication strategies, and learning strategies. Transfer of training was also considered in the coding framework; however, the available data did not provide sufficient evidence to establish a direct connection between the observed expressions and specific classroom instruction or practice. Therefore, transfer of training was not included in the final frequency count.

Table 2.

Distribution of Interlanguage Processes by Participants

Participant	Gender	L1 Transfer	Overgeneralization	Transfer of Training	Communication Strategies	Learning Strategies
FS	Male	7	1	0	1	2
IHA	Male	5	0	0	2	2
AYA	Male	3	2	0	0	1
API	Female	1	3	0	1	1
MPP	Female	4	0	0	1	0
LNS	Female	2	0	0	2	0
Total		22	6	0	7	6

L1 transfer was the most frequently coded process, with 22 instances across the six participants. Communication strategies and learning strategies accounted for seven and six instances, respectively, while overgeneralization occurred six times. No instance was sufficiently supported as transfer of training. The distribution therefore indicates that the learners' unprepared oral production contained both linguistic patterns associated with developing interlanguage and observable ways of managing communication and language production during interaction.

1. L1 Transfer

L1 transfer occurred in all participants' speech and was the most frequent process. This process involved grammatical structures and lexical choices influenced by Indonesian. Some of the forms found included copula omission, word order transfer, literal translation, WH-question transfer, preposition transfer, and L1 discourse sequencing.

Datum 1 (Copula omission and literal translation)

MPP: What's your status?

IHA: My status is in mahasiswa, student. I student in UMK

In this exchange, “*my status is in mahasiswa*” reflects a literal translation and prepositional pattern influenced by Indonesian, while “*I student in UMK*” involves omission of the copular verb. The two forms illustrate how participants drew on familiar L1 patterns when producing English during real-time interaction.

Datum 2 (WH-question transfer)

FS: ***What your hobby, Amu?***

The utterance reflects the Indonesian question structure “*Apa hobimu?*” in which the English auxiliary and verb arrangement required for the target-language question are absent. The form was therefore interpreted as L1 transfer rather than as a general grammatical error.

Datum 3 (Word order transfer)

MPP: ***We are major the same.***

The expression reflects the Indonesian ordering in “*Jurusan kita sama,*” in which the equivalent components are transferred into English without adjustment to the target-language structure.

Taken together, these examples show that L1 influence appeared in several aspects of the learners' oral production. Rather than treating every non-target-like form as L1 transfer, the coding included only forms for which a recognizable relationship with Indonesian structure or expression could be identified. The frequency of these instances made L1 transfer the most prominent coded process in the dataset.

2. Communication Strategies

Communication strategies were identified when participants encountered an immediate difficulty in expressing or negotiating meaning and used a compensatory or interactional resource to maintain the exchange. Three forms were sufficiently supported in the data: self-repair, code-switching, and circumlocution.

Datum 4 (Self-repair)

IHA: *My father and my brother eh... and my mother... and have two siblings.*

The participant continued and reorganized the utterance while constructing the message. The modification occurred during ongoing speech and helped the participant continue expressing the intended idea rather than abandoning the utterance.

Datum 5 (Code-switching)

IHA: *I hate in Indonesia because... corruptor... menghancurkan.*

The participant temporarily shifted to Indonesian when producing the intended expression in English appeared difficult. The use of “menghancurkan” provided an immediately available linguistic resource that enabled the participant to continue expressing the intended meaning.

Datum 6 (Circumlocution)

FS: *You like es cekek?*

API: *What is that? **Is that the one with the straw and plastic in it?***

When API did not recognize the expression “*es cekek*,” she described characteristics of the referent rather than ending the exchange or leaving the communicative problem unresolved. The description of the straw and plastic container functioned as a circumlocutory strategy for negotiating the unfamiliar expression.

These examples demonstrate different ways of managing immediate communication problems. Self-repair allowed participants to reorganize an ongoing utterance, code-switching provided access to an available linguistic resource, and circumlocution enabled a participant to negotiate meaning when a lexical item was unfamiliar. A topic shift was not automatically coded as avoidance because the available interactional evidence did not establish that the learner abandoned the topic due to linguistic difficulty.

3. Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization occurred when participants extended an English grammatical pattern beyond the context in which the pattern was appropriate. The identified forms included inappropriate use of inflectional marking and the combination of incompatible verb patterns.

Datum 7 (Third person singular marking)

LNS: *Yeah, why you choose this major?*

AYA: *Mm., just I like this English language, **I'm really likes**, I love English language, what about you?*

In “*I'm really likes*,” the participant used the third-person singular marker -s with the first-person subject “*I*.” The form suggests an extension of the English third-person singular pattern to a context where it does not apply.

Datum 8 (Gerund overuse)

API: *I like **to reading** books.*

In this utterance, the learner combined the infinitival marker “to” with the gerund form “reading.” The form was interpreted as overgeneralization because the learner appeared to extend a familiar verb pattern without distinguishing between the infinitival and gerund constructions.

These examples indicate that participants were producing forms that reflected developing knowledge of English grammatical patterns. The errors were therefore interpreted not simply as random inaccuracies but as evidence of learners' developing interlanguage rules. At the same time, the data do not allow conclusions about the learners' underlying grammatical knowledge beyond the observed productions.

4. Learning Strategies

Learning strategies were identified more cautiously because pauses, repetitions, and hesitations do not automatically indicate conscious language-learning activity. In the present study, an observable speaking behavior was classified as a learning strategy when it indicated planning, retrieval, monitoring, or reformulation and was supported by relevant contextual or interview evidence.

Datum 9 (Planning pause)

IHA: *My hobby is one football, two swimming, and three running, and four ... (thinking) fishing.*

The pause occurred while the participant was producing a sequence of hobby items and before retrieving the final lexical item, “fishing.” Interview data also indicated that the participant sometimes paused or stopped when trying to remember an English word or organize the next part of an utterance. The observed pause and the participant's explanation therefore provided support for interpreting this instance as a planning or retrieval strategy.

Other pauses and repetitions were treated cautiously. Repetition alone was not considered sufficient evidence of a learning strategy because it may also result from hesitation, turn management, or ordinary disfluency. Accordingly, only instances for which the available evidence supported an interpretation of conscious production management were included in the frequency count.

The learning strategy findings therefore suggest that some participants engaged in observable forms of planning and retrieval during unprepared speaking, although these instances were less frequent than L1 transfer in the present dataset.

5. Transfer of Training

Transfer of training was considered in the coding framework because classroom instruction can potentially influence learners' subsequent language production. However, no observed instance in the present dataset provided sufficient evidence to establish a

direct connection between a particular expression and specific classroom instruction or practice.

Several participants produced formulaic expressions, including self-introduction and closing expressions. However, the expressions themselves were not sufficient evidence of transfer of training because their classroom origin could not be established from the available data. They were therefore excluded from the final frequency count.

This finding does not indicate that classroom instruction had no influence on the participants' English production. Rather, it indicates that such influence could not be reliably identified as transfer of training within the evidence available for the present analysis.

RQ2. What gender-related patterns in the manifestation of interlanguage processes can be observed within the case?

To answer the second research question, the coded instances were grouped according to the three male and three female participants. The descriptive distribution is presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Distribution of Interlanguage Processes by Gender Group

Interlanguage Process	Male (n=3)	Female (n=3)
L1 Transfer	15	7
Overgeneralization	3	3
Transfer of Training	0	0
Communication Strategies	3	4
Learning Strategies	5	1
Total Processes	26	15

L1 transfer was the most frequently coded process in both groups, with 15 instances among male participants and 7 among female participants. Overgeneralization occurred three times in each group. Communication strategies occurred three times among male participants and four times among female participants, while learning strategies accounted for five instances among male participants and one among female participants. Transfer of training was not identified in either group.

The male participants produced more coded instances overall in the present dataset, largely because of the greater number of L1-transfer instances. However, these raw frequencies cannot be interpreted as evidence of systematic gender differences because the analysis did not normalize the frequencies according to speech length or the amount of language produced by each participant. The groups also contained only three participants each.

Importantly, the distribution shows that the same general categories were not necessarily represented at the same frequency across individuals. The observed variation is therefore treated as a descriptive pattern within this particular case rather than as evidence of general gender-based differences in interlanguage use.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to analyse the appearance of interlanguage processes in the spontaneous speech of first-semester EFL students and to study the potential gender-related patterns in these processes. The findings indicate that unprepared oral interaction provides a useful context for examining interlanguage processes because learners must formulate and respond to utterances with limited opportunity for prior preparation. In the present case, participants were given topics immediately before interaction and were not provided with time to script, memorize, or read their responses. Their speech therefore provided observable evidence of how developing linguistic resources and communicative strategies were mobilized during real-time interaction. This supports Selinker's (1972) view of interlanguage as a developing linguistic system rather than a collection of isolated errors, while also showing that the processes manifested in spoken production may involve both linguistic forms and interactional strategies. Daflizar (2024) also conducted a study recently at an Indonesian institution and showed the tendency of EFL students in the early semester to show interlanguage elements in unplanned talks. Similar trends have also been found in other EFL situations, such as first-year students in Vietnam (Uyen & Dieu, 2023). Taken together, these findings support the use of unprepared oral production as a context for observing how learners draw on developing linguistic and communicative resources during real-time interaction.

One of the most salient outcomes of this study is the prominent role of the first language (L1) in the participants' spontaneous speaking. The prominence of L1 transfer may be explained by the processing demands of spontaneous speaking. Because learners had little time to plan and monitor their utterances, previously established linguistic knowledge may have served as an available resource during real-time production. From a cognitive SLA perspective, speaking requires learners to manage multiple demands while formulating and monitoring language. Consequently, familiar L1 structures become readily available resources for maintaining communication. This supports Selinker's (1972)

proposition that language transfer constitutes one of the major processes underlying interlanguage development. These findings are consistent with the concept in Second Language Acquisition put forward by Ellis (2008) that language creation in a rush often reflects an as yet unstable grammar. Similarly, Lightbown & Spada (2019) point out that for EFL, when there is limited exposure to the target language outside the classroom, the effect of L1 tends to be more prolonged. In this case, dependency on L1 is not a failure of language, but may be seen as a sort of adaptation that helps pupils maintain the flow of communication when the usage of the L2 form is not entirely automated.

In addition to L1 transfer, overgeneralisation also identified in the participants' oral production. Overgeneralization appeared to reflect learners' ongoing rule formation. Rather than simply reproducing L1 patterns, participants sometimes seemed extended English grammatical patterns to contexts in which those patterns were not appropriate during spontaneous interaction. Under real-time pressure, attentional resources were divided between meaning construction and grammatical encoding, reducing opportunities for self-monitoring. As a result, partially acquired rules were often overextended. From this perspective, overgeneralization should be viewed as evidence of developmental progress rather than as random errors. This opinion is consistent with Corder (1981) who states that students' errors are an indication of their linguistic system development. In spontaneous speaking settings, overgeneralisation also indicates a trade-off between correctness and fluency. Under time pressure, students have to divide their attention between producing messages and coding grammar, such that the monitoring of forms is limited (Fauziati, 2017; Wang, 2020). This phenomenon has been widely discussed in the literature on oral output and shows that learners at an initial stage of learning prefer interaction to flow over form. This finding of overgeneralisation is also consistent with the results obtained by (Betancourt González & Alvarado Martínez, 2020) who noticed the tendency to over-apply rules in early L2 oral production. Similar problems are also observed in cross-border EFL contexts, (Uyen & Dieu, 2023) demonstrating that overgeneralisation is a part of the process of establishing and testing rules in the development of interlanguage systems, not merely random blunders. Taken together, these findings indicate that learners are actively constructing and testing grammatical structure during spontaneous production.

In this paper, the communication strategy findings further show that learners did not rely only on linguistic knowledge when difficulties arose during unprepared speaking. Self-repair, code-switching, and circumlocution functioned as compensatory resources that allowed participants to continue expressing or negotiating meaning despite limited access to target-language forms. This pattern is consistent with Tarone (1981) view of communication strategies as ways of maintaining the intended message when learners encounter difficulty during communication. In the present data, self-repair allowed participants to reorganize an ongoing utterance, code-switching provided an immediately

available linguistic resource, and circumlocution enabled a participant to describe an unfamiliar referent. Yakut & Bada (2021) further support these findings by demonstrating that EFL learners generally use self-repair, circumlocution and code-switching to maintain the contact and deal with restrictions in their language expertise. Recent studies on spontaneous speaking in Indonesian language schools (Handayani, Sukarno, Perdana, & Meisani, 2025) also show that learners employ vocabulary simplification, paraphrasing and their personal knowledge in order to remain proficient in communicating under real-time pressure. These strategies therefore illustrate how learners managed communicative problems in real time rather than simply producing or correcting grammatical forms. The topic shift identified in the original coding was not retained as avoidance because the available interactional evidence did not establish that the participant changed the topic because of linguistic difficulty.

The learning strategy findings were more limited and were interpreted cautiously. The clearest instance involved a planning pause during lexical retrieval, which was supported by the participant's interview account of pausing when trying to remember an English word or organize an utterance. This suggests that, in some instances, learners actively managed the production process while speaking. Similarly, EFL Indonesia's Handayani et al. (2025) study on spontaneous speaking in the classroom indicated that when direct language processing is challenging, learners often compress vocabulary, paraphrase, and use personal knowledge to maintain seamless communication. However, the findings do not justify treating every pause or repetition as evidence of metacognitive regulation. Observable hesitation may have several functions, and therefore only behaviors supported by contextual or interview evidence were included in this category. The relatively small number of supported instances suggests that observable planning and retrieval behaviors were less frequently identifiable than L1 transfer in the present dataset.

Apart from language learning, transfer of training was not identified with sufficient evidence in the present dataset. Although participants produced several formulaic expressions, the analysis could not establish that these expressions originated from specific classroom instruction or practice. This distinction is important because formulaic language alone does not demonstrate transfer of training. The absence of a coded instance therefore should not be interpreted as evidence that classroom instruction had no influence on the learners' speech. Rather, it reflects the evidential boundary of the present dataset and the decision to include only processes that could be supported by the available linguistic, contextual, instructional, or interview evidence.

The gender-related patterns observed in this case should be interpreted as exploratory variation rather than evidence of systematic male-female differences. The male participants accounted for more coded instances overall in the present dataset, particularly in L1 transfer, while the female participants showed comparable frequencies of

overgeneralization and slightly more communication-strategy instances. However, these raw differences cannot be separated from individual variation and differences in the amount of speech produced. The interview data also showed that participants did not hold a uniform view of gender and speaking. For example, some participants reported no meaningful gender difference, whereas others described differences in comfort or interaction depending on the interlocutor. These individual accounts suggest that gender-related variation in this case cannot be interpreted independently of interpersonal and contextual factors. Accordingly, the findings are best understood as descriptive patterns within the case rather than evidence that gender determines learners' interlanguage behavior.

The results of the present study confirm in general that spontaneous speaking offers useful context for observing manifestations of interlanguage processes in real-time language production. Spontaneous interactions offer a window into the real-time processing conditions of language output and show how learners negotiate techniques of fluency, accuracy, and compensation in unplanned communication scenarios. In the context of EFL Indonesia, where naturalistic opportunities of using English are rather restricted, spontaneous speaking activities may therefore provide opportunities for observation, both in research and instructional practice. The inclusion of gender as a component of study also contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of interlanguage development and shows the significance of creating spoken learning activities for accommodating different communication methods that students utilise.

However, it is important to emphasize that these findings do not indicate inherent differences in linguistic ability between male and female learners. Instead, the observed variation is context-dependent and should be interpreted cautiously. Given the small sample size and exploratory nature of the study, the results should be interpreted as preliminary indications rather than definitive evidence of gender-based differences in interlanguage use. In addition, the study analysed spontaneous speech over a relatively short length of time, so it was not possible to see the interlanguage development over a longer period of time. The analysis also mostly focuses on qualitative patterns, leaving potential for future studies to incorporate quantitative measurements of fluency, complexity, and accuracy.

Future studies may overcome these constraints by recruiting a larger and more heterogeneous sample of participants, by collecting data over several semesters and by integrating qualitative analysis with quantitative measures. Future research could also study the effects of instructional interventions, such as explicit strategy instruction or task-based speaking activities, on interlanguage development in spontaneous speech. Furthermore, it would be useful to examine other individual difference variables like

anxiety, motivation, or competence level in order to have a more complete picture of how learners cope with spontaneous communication in the setting of EFL.

The findings of this study therefore lie in connecting observable linguistic forms with the interactional strategies through which learners managed communication when producing English without prior preparation. This study adds to a more nuanced understanding of interlanguage dynamics by indicating the role of gender in strategic behaviours rather than competency, and it supports a pedagogical approach that prioritises flexibility, adaptation, and learner agency in EFL speaking training.

CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the interlanguage processes manifested in the spontaneous speaking of six first-semester EFL learners and explored gender-related patterns within the case. The findings identified four processes in the analyzed dataset: L1 transfer, overgeneralization, communication strategies, and learning strategies. L1 transfer was the most frequently identified process, followed by communication strategies, overgeneralization, and learning strategies. Transfer of training was not clearly identifiable because the available data did not establish a sufficient connection between the observed expressions and identifiable classroom presentation or practice.

The findings also show that interlanguage in unprepared oral production is manifested through both linguistic forms and learners' efforts to manage communication. Participants produced non-target-like forms that could be interpreted as L1 transfer or overgeneralization, while they also used communication strategies such as code-switching, circumlocution, and self-repair to maintain interaction. In several cases, pauses and other planning behaviors were supported by interview accounts describing learners' attempts to retrieve or formulate language.

The gender-related findings should be understood as exploratory patterns within the particular six-participant case. Although the male participants produced more coded instances overall, the raw frequencies were not normalized for speech length or duration, and no process was exclusive to either gender group. The interview data also indicated that participants differed individually in how they perceived the role of interlocutors and gender in speaking. Therefore, the findings do not support general conclusions about male and female learners but provide a descriptive account of variation observed in this case.

Overall, the study contributes to interlanguage research by illustrating how developing linguistic forms and communicative strategies become visible when learners produce English without prior preparation. The findings also suggest that unprepared speaking activities can provide useful opportunities for observing how learners draw on their available linguistic and communicative resources during real-time interaction. Future research may extend this work through larger samples, longer observation periods, and

measures that normalize the frequency of interlanguage processes according to speech length or duration.

REFERENCES

- Adnyani, N. L. P. S., & Kusumawardani, D. A. N. (2020). Interlanguage Analysis on Speech Produced by EFL Learners. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 6(2), 178–185. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.6.2.1727.178-185>
- Anindya, A. S., Inayati, D., & Ulani, A. (2022). Students' Perceptions on The Use of L1 in EFL Learning. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Learning*, 25(1), 310–318. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24071.4162>
- Ariyanti, A., & Fitriana, R. (2017). EFL Students' Difficulties and Needs in Essay Writing. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR)*, 158. <https://doi.org/10.2991/ictte-17.2017.4>
- Aslan, A., & Taş, T. (2024). Implementation of Five Pushed Output Activities in an EFL Speaking Class. *Journal of Language Research*, 8(2), 19–29. <https://doi.org/10.51726/jlr.1502523>
- Betancourt González, R. C., & Alvarado Martínez, E. (2020). The Interlanguage in Learners of English as a Foreign Language: An Error Analysis Approach 1. *MEXTESOL Journal*, 44(1). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373161115_The_Interlanguage_in_Learners_of_English_as_a_Foreign_Language_An_Error_Analysis_Approach
- Corder, S. P. (1981). *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Daflizar, D. (2024). Out-of-Class Speaking Anxiety among Indonesian EFL Students and Its Relationship with Self-Perceived Speaking Skills, Vocabulary Proficiency, and Gender. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 12(1), 240. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v12i1.9342>
- Dinsa, M. T., Seyoum, G., & Dinsa, D. T. (2022). The Influence of Gender and Study Duration on EFL Learners' Speaking Strategies Use. *International Journal of Language Education*, 6(1), 10–24. <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v6i1.19272>
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The Psychology of the Language Learner: Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ellis, R. (2008). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition* (2nd ed.). Oxford : Oxford University Press.

- Ellis, Rod. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fauzi, I., & Asi, N. (2023). Examining Speaking Anxiety of Indonesian Learners of English: A Case of University Students. *Examining Speaking Anxiety of Indonesian Learners of English Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 7(2), 263–275. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v7i2.1338>
- Fauziati, E. (2017). Native and target language influence on the students' interlanguage productions a case of Indonesian EFL compositions. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 7(1), 54–63. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v7i1.6858>
- Fernández Sesma, M. G., Sortillón González, P. E., & Rodríguez Valenzuela, A. E. (2025). EFL Students' Perceptions of Collaborative Learning in Facilitating the Development of Speaking Skills. *Elia*, (25), 141–182. <https://doi.org/10.12795/elia.2025.i25.5>
- Foster, P., & Tavakoli, P. (2009). Native Speakers and Task Performance: Comparing Effects on Complexity, Fluency, and Lexical Diversity. *Language Learning*, 59(4), 866–896. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2009.00528.x>
- Fransiska, W., & Habibi, A. (2021). Investigating the Impact of Interlanguage on Adult EFL Learners in Indonesia: Strengths and Weaknesses. *KnE Social Sciences*, 663–671. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v5i4.8722>
- Han, Z. (2009). *Interlanguage and fossilization: Towards an analytic model*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Handayani, R., Sukarno, B. S. T., Perdana, P. R., & Meisani, D. R. (2025). Exploring University EFL Students' Use of Communication Strategies in Impromptu Speaking. *Journal of English Language and Education*, 10(3), 686–693. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i3.941>
- Harahap, W. S. P. (2021). Interlanguage of Error Analysis on Students Writing in Covid-19 Pandemic Era. *Proceeding of International Conference on Language Pedagogy (ICOLP)*, 1(1), 240–246. <https://doi.org/10.24036/icolp.v1i1.46>
- Kamrul Hassan, M., & Rami, Z. (2024). Exploring Nuances in Second Language Acquisition: An Error Analysis Perspective. *Migration Letters*, 21, 294–298. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59670/ml.v21i4.7319>
- Levelt, W. J. M. (1989). *Speaking: From Intention to Articulation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2019). *How Language Are Learned* (5th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Mohtasham, L., & Farnia, M. (2017). English Speaking Anxiety: A Study of the Effect of Gender on Iranian EFL University Students' Perceptions. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 2(4), 66–79. <https://doi.org/10.29252/ijree.2.4.66>
- Mukhtiningrum, I., Mahmud, M., & Halim, A. (2024). Speaking Anxiety of Students in EFL Classroom Based on Gender in Higher Education. *Pinisi Journal of Art, Humanity, and Sosial Studies*, 4(2), 463–474. Retrieved from <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>
- Muthia, D. R., Fahriany, F., & Utami, M. A. (2021). Interlanguage in recount writing text on 8th grade secondary school student. *Leksika: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra Dan Pengajarannya*, 15(2), 84. <https://doi.org/10.30595/lks.v15i2.9805>
- Nation, I. S. P., & Newton, J. (2020). *Teaching ESL/EFL Listening and Speaking* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge. Retrieved from www.routledge.com/
- Okyar, H. (2023). Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety and its Link to Speaking Self-Efficacy, Fear of Negative Evaluation, Self-Perceived Proficiency and Gender. *Science Insights Education Frontiers*, 17(2), 2715–2731. <https://doi.org/10.15354/sief.23.or388>
- Oxford, R. L., & Nyikos, M. (1989). Variables Affecting Choice of Language Learning Strategies by University Students. *The Modern Language Journal*, 73(3), 291–300. <https://doi.org/10.2307/327003>
- Pakzadian, M., & Tootkaboni, A. A. (2018). The role of gender in conversational dominance: A study of EFL learners. *Cogent Education*, 5(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2018.1560602>
- Puspita, D. (2019). Error Analysis on Learners' Interlanguage and Intralanguage: A Case Study of Two Adolescent Students. *TEKNOSASTIK*, 17(2), 12. <https://doi.org/10.33365/ts.v17i2.321>
- Rahayu, E. Y., Soepriatmadji, L., & Purwanto, S. (2022). Interlanguage Performance of EFL College Students: Evidenced in the First Semester of the English Letters Major-Indonesia. *English Language Teaching*, 15(7), 13. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v15n7p13>
- Rahman Hz, B. (2022). An Exploration on Students' Public Speaking Anxiety: Stifin Perspective. *LLT Journal: Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 25(1), 149–159. <https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.v25i1.4502>
- Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 10(3), 209–231.
- Tarone, E. (1981). Some Thoughts on the Notion of Communication Strategy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 15(3), 285–295.

- Thornbury, S. (2005). *How to Teach Speaking*. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Uyen, P. T. M., & Dieu, P. T. (2023). Common Difficulties in Speaking of English-Majored Freshmen at Tay Do University. *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, 8(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejel.v8i1.4626>
- Wang, Y. (2020). Interlanguage and Its Implications in College English Teaching and Learning. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 21(2), 60–63. <https://doi.org/10.3968/11891>
- Wen, Z., Skehan, P., & Sparks, R. (2022). *Language aptitude research: From testing to theory and practice*.
- Yakut, I., & Bada, E. (2021). Interlanguage Development of Turkish Speakers of English: Exploring Oral and Written Communication Strategies. *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 9(4), 611–626. <https://doi.org/10.22190/JTESAP2104611Y>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zhang, X., Ardasheva, Y., & Austin, B. W. (2020). Self-efficacy and english public speaking performance: A mixed method approach. *English for Specific Purposes*, 59, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2020.02.001>